



Testimony of Lori J. Pelletier, Executive Secretary-Treasurer
of the Connecticut AFL-CIO
Before the Program Review and Investigative Committee
October 3, 2013

Senator Kissel and Representative Mushinsky and members of the committee, I am Lori Pelletier Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO and I appreciate this opportunity to address the issues raised by the Study on the reemployment of older workers.

I was taken aback by the idea that an older worker is of age 50 because it seemed to me that workers of that age have a good fifteen years before they are eligible for social security. Nevertheless workers of that age have vast knowledge and experience. I was also troubled by the phrase "unrealistic salary requirements". How is it that we would put that in a official document? We all know it takes nearly \$20.00 to be able to afford to live in a decent home and pay for necessities of life, well that is regardless of age. Yet, for people who are age 50 odds are they have been in the workplace for nearly 35 years, \$20.00 or more an hour is not unrealistic, it is very realistic and deserved.

During the mid1990's when Pratt &Whitney was laying of hundreds of workers each week, and those remaining employed were shuffled into retraining programs so they could be reassigned. More senior workers brought with them skills which enabled them to continue to be very productive. However, many workers were put into the situation of being "retrained" several times because of where they landed after layoffs.

The idea that a worker age 50 and above is suddenly going to be retrained to be an auto mechanic, or hairdresser, or electrician seems farfetched. What we need to think about is how to better use their workplace knowledge and transfer it to the younger generation of workers.

In the last decade our Vo-Tech system has gone from 12,000 students to well below 10,000. That is heading in the wrong direction. Study after study shows that the education and training provided within this system is of the utmost importance to the workforce of the future. We should be growing our technical high schools population because the demand for those graduates will be there.

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By combining an increase in technical education opportunities for students with an "older" workforce full of experience and work ethic we can set the stage for producing a workforce with both knowledge, and experience and still utilize "older" workers in a setting where they can get satisfaction for knowing they are making our State a better place.

Instead of focusing on how to retrain these older workers, why not look at how to insert these workers into our Technical High Schools so that the 35 years of knowledge can be put to better use.

Thank you to the committee for taking up this important issue, and if you have any questions I would be happy to address them now or at your convenience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Pelletier', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lori J. Pelletier
Executive Secretary-Treasurer